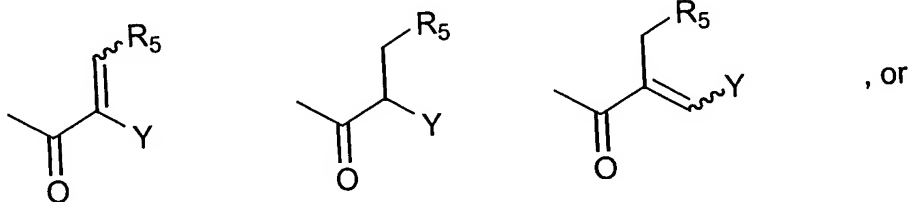


in which

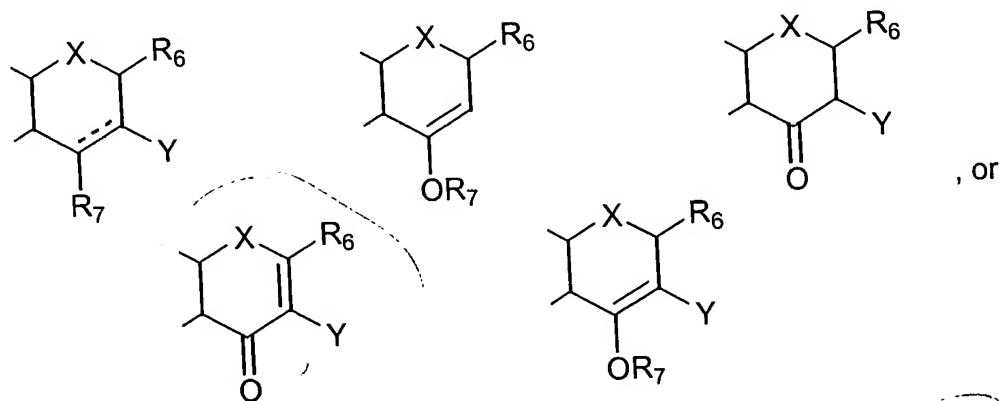
R_1 and R_2 are independently hydrogen, hydroxy, OR_9 , $OC(O)R_{10}$, $OS(O)R_{10}$, CHO, $C(=O)R_{10}$, COOH, CO_2R_{10} , $CONR_3R_4$, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, thio, alkylthio, amino, alkylamino, dialkylamino, nitro or halo,

Z is hydrogen, and

W is R_1 , A is hydrogen, hydroxy, NR_3R_4 or thio, and B is selected from



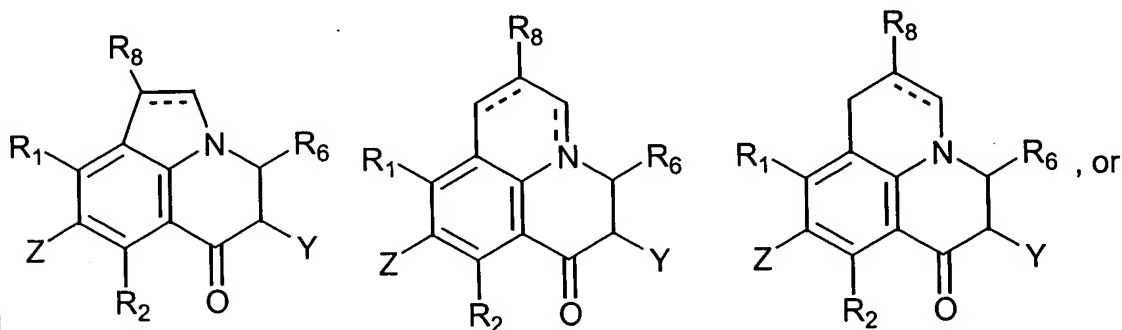
W is R_1 , and A and B taken together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form a six-membered ring selected from



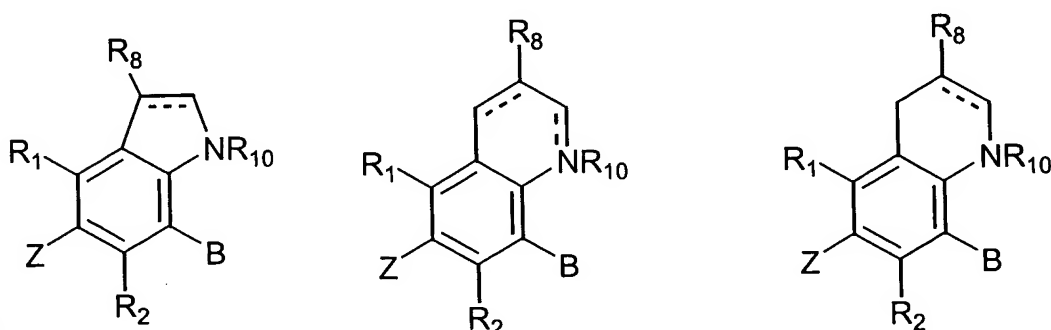
W , A and B taken together with the groups to which they are associated comprise

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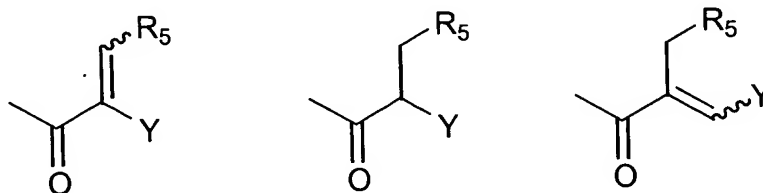
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W and A taken together with the groups to which they are associated comprise



and B is



wherein

R₃ is hydrogen, alkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, an amino acid, C(O)R₁₁ where R₁₁ is hydrogen alkyl, aryl, arylalkyl or an amino acid, or CO₂R₁₂ where R₁₂ is hydrogen, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl or arylalkyl,

R₄ is hydrogen, alkyl or aryl,

or R₃ and R₄ taken together with the nitrogen to which they are attached comprise pyrrolidinyl or piperidinyl,

R₅ is hydrogen, C(O)R₁₁ where R₁₁ is as previously defined, or CO₂R₁₂ where R₁₂ is as previously defined,

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R_6 is hydrogen, hydroxy, alkyl, aryl, amino, thio, NR_3R_4 , COR_{11} where R_{11} is as previously defined, CO_2R_{12} where R_{12} is as previously defined or $CONR_3R_4$,

R_7 is hydrogen, $C(O)R_{11}$ where R_{11} is as previously defined, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl or $Si(R_{13})_3$ where each R_{13} is independently hydrogen, alkyl or aryl,

R_8 is hydrogen, hydroxy, alkoxy or alkyl,

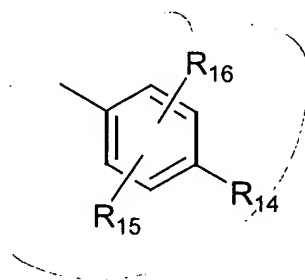
R_9 is alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, $C(O)R_{11}$ where R_{11} is as previously defined, or $Si(R_{13})_3$ where R_{13} is as previously defined,

R_{10} is hydrogen, alkyl, haloalkyl, amino, aryl, arylalkyl, an amino acid, alkylamino or dialkylamino,

the symbol "—" represents either a single bond or a double bond,

X is O, NR_4 or S, and

Y is



wherein

R_{14} , R_{15} and R_{16} are independently hydrogen, hydroxy, OR_9 , $OC(O)R_{10}$, $OS(O)R_{10}$, CHO, $C(O)R_{10}$, COOH, CO_2R_{10} , $CONR_3R_4$, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, thio, alkylthio, amino, alkylamino, dialkylamino, nitro or halo,

with the proviso that

when

R_1 is hydroxy, or $OC(O)R_A$ where R_A is alkyl or an amino acid, and

R_2 is hydrogen, hydroxy, OR_B where R_B is an amino acid or $C(O)R_A$ where R_A is as previously defined, and

W is hydrogen, then

Y is not phenyl, 4-hydroxyphenyl, 4-alkoxyphenyl or 4-alkylphenyl;

when

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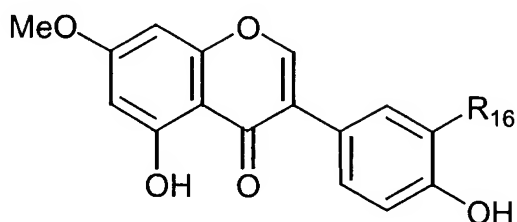
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R_1 and R_2 are hydroxy, and
 R_6 and W are hydrogen, then
 Y is not phenyl; and

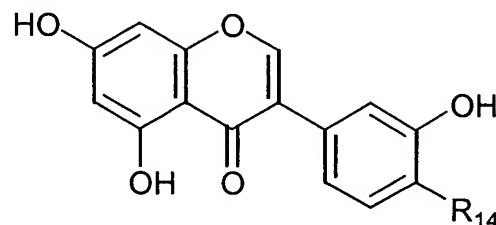
when

R_1 is hydroxy, and
 R_2 , R_6 and W are hydrogen, then
 Y is not 4'-hydroxy-3'-methoxyphenyl; and

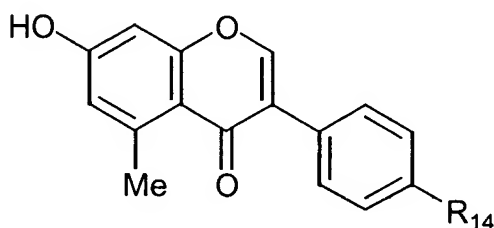
* with the proviso that the following compounds are excluded:



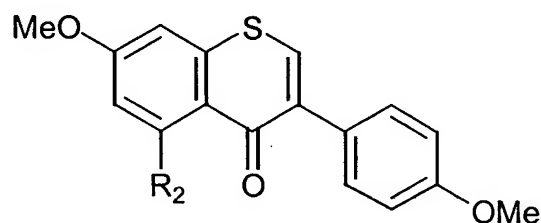
$R_{16} = H, OH$



$R_{14} = OH, OMe$



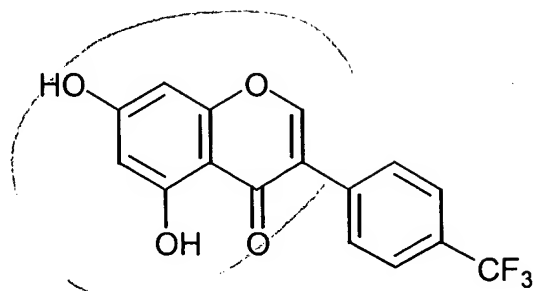
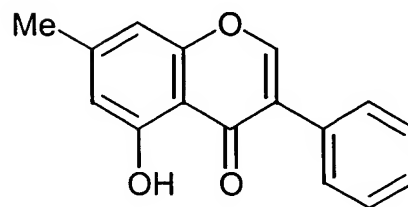
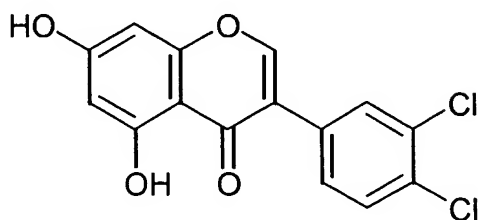
$R_{14} = Me, Cl$



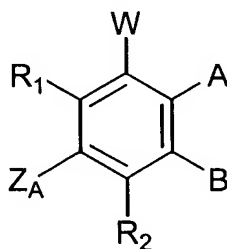
$R_2 = H, OMe$

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13. (New)

An isoflavone compound or analogue thereof of the general formula II:

(II)

in which

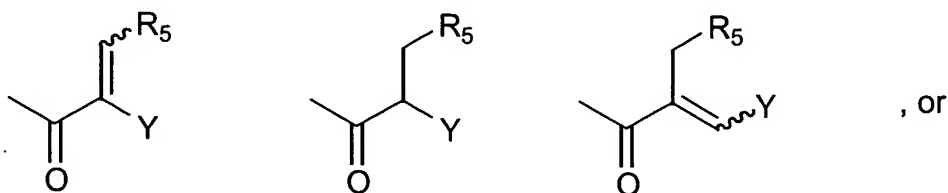
R_1 and R_2 are independently hydrogen, hydroxy, OR_9 , $OC(O)R_{10}$, $OS(O)R_{10}$, CHO, $C(O)R_{10}$, COOH, CO_2R_{10} , $CONR_3R_4$, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, thio, alkylthio, amino, alkylamino, dialkylamino, nitro or halo,

Z_A is OR_9 , $OC(O)R_{10}$, $OS(O)R_{10}$, CHO, $C(O)R_{10}$, COOH, CO_2R_{10} , $CONR_3R_4$, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, thio, alkylthio, amino, alkylamino, dialkylamino, nitro or halo, and

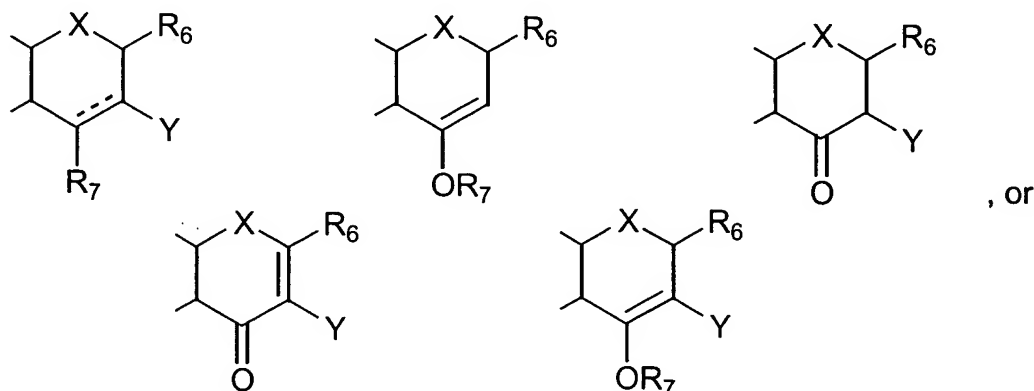
W is R_1 , A is hydrogen, hydroxy, NR_3R_4 or thio, and B is selected from

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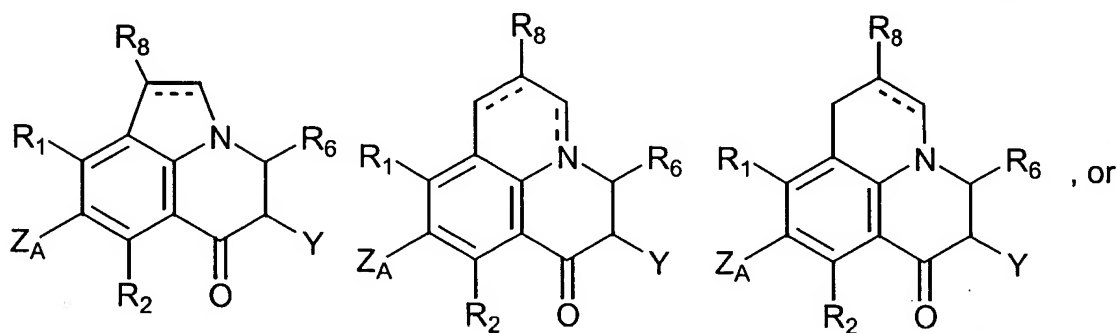
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W is R₁, and A and B taken together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form a six-membered ring selected from



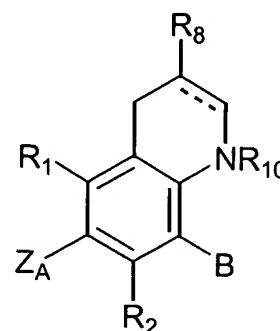
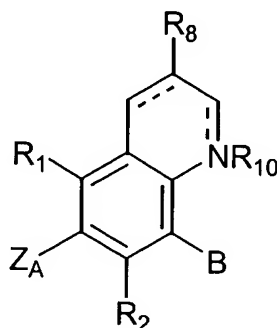
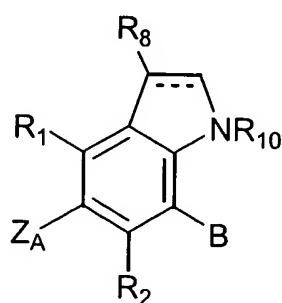
W, A and B taken together with the groups to which they are associated comprise



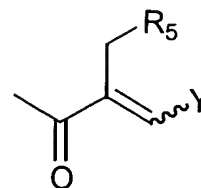
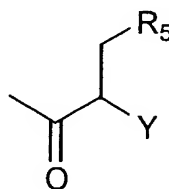
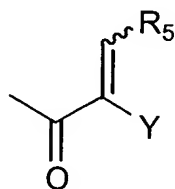
W and A taken together with the groups to which they are associated comprise

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and B is



wherein

R₃ is hydrogen, alkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, an amino acid, C(O)R₁₁ where R₁₁ is hydrogen alkyl, aryl, arylalkyl or an amino acid, or CO₂R₁₂ where R₁₂ is hydrogen, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl or arylalkyl,

R₄ is hydrogen, alkyl or aryl,

or R₃ and R₄ taken together with the nitrogen to which they are attached are pyrrolidinyl or piperidinyl,

R₅ is hydrogen, C(O)R₁₁ where R₁₁ is as previously defined, or CO₂R₁₂ where R₁₂ is as previously defined,

R₆ is hydrogen, hydroxy, alkyl, aryl, amino, thio, NR₃R₄, COR₁₁ where R₁₁ is as previously defined, CO₂R₁₂ where R₁₂ is as previously defined or CONR₃R₄,

R₇ is hydrogen, C(O)R₁₁ where R₁₁ is as previously defined, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl or Si(R₁₃)₃ where each R₁₃ is independently hydrogen, alkyl or aryl,

R₈ is hydrogen, hydroxy, alkoxy or alkyl,

R₉ is alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, C(O)R₁₁ where R₁₁ is as previously defined, or Si(R₁₃)₃ where R₁₃ is as previously defined,

R₁₀ is hydrogen, alkyl, haloalkyl, amino, aryl, arylalkyl, an amino acid, alkylamino or dialkylamino,

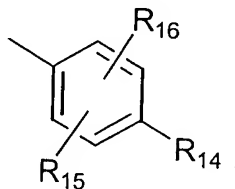
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the symbol "—" represents either a single bond or a double bond,

X is O, NR₄ or S, and

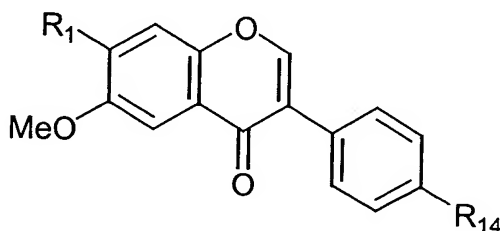
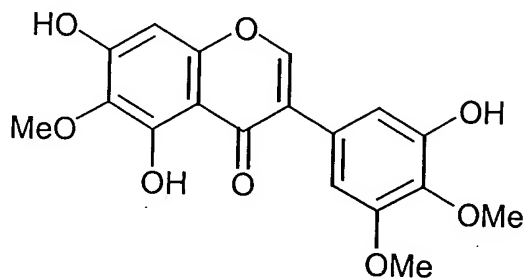
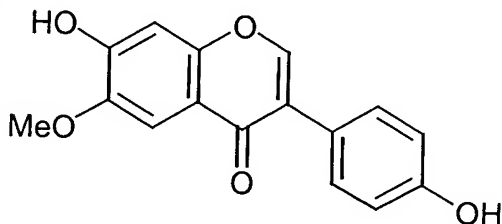
Y is



wherein

R₁₄, R₁₅ and R₁₆ are independently hydrogen, hydroxy, OR₉, OC(O)R₁₀, OS(O)R₁₀, CHO, C(O)R₁₀, COOH, CO₂R₁₀, CONR₃R₄, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, thio, alkylthio, amino, alkylamino, dialkylamino, nitro or halo,

* with the proviso that the following compounds are excluded:

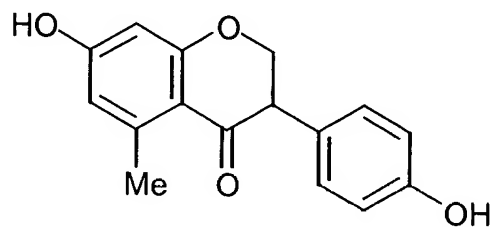
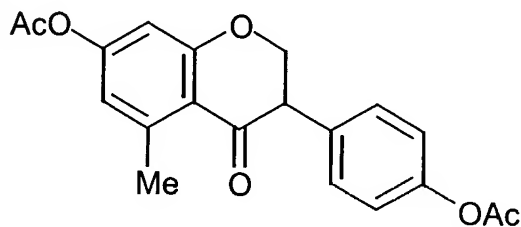
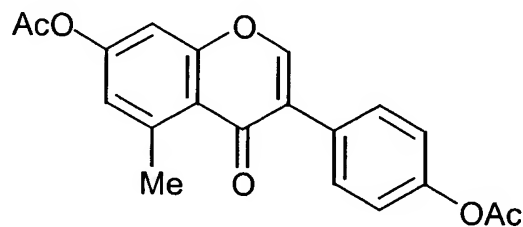
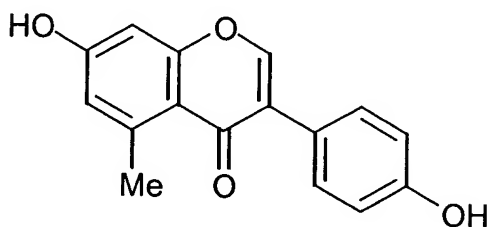
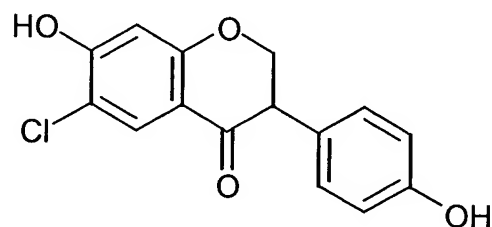
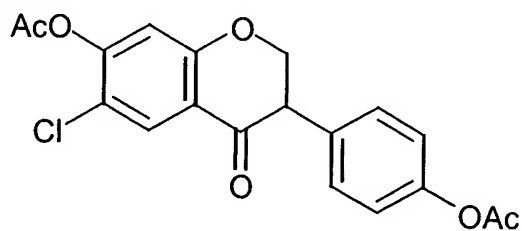
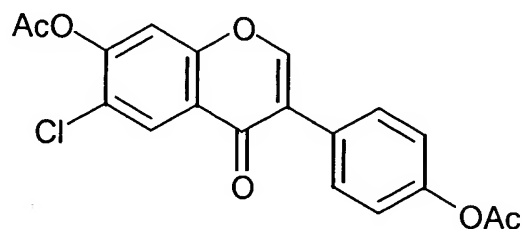
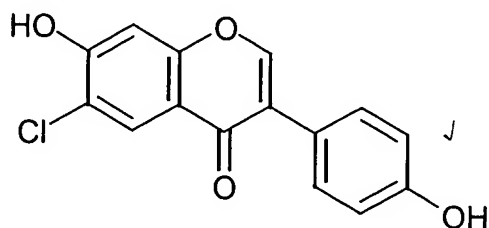


R₁ = OH, OMe
R₁₄ = OH, OMe

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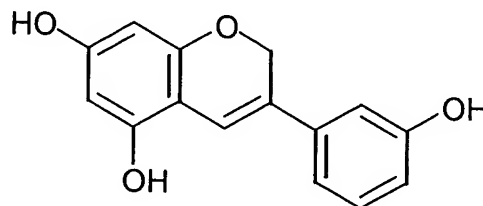
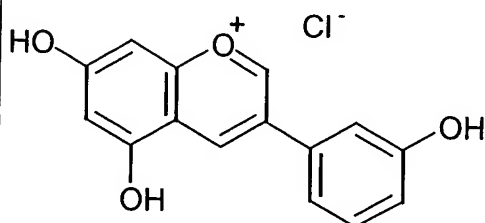
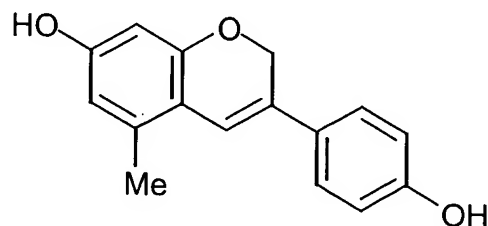
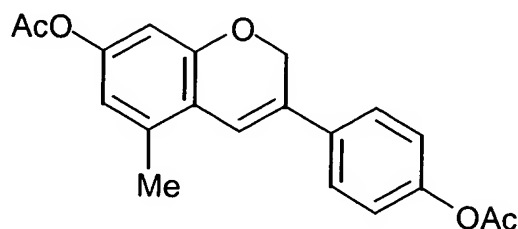
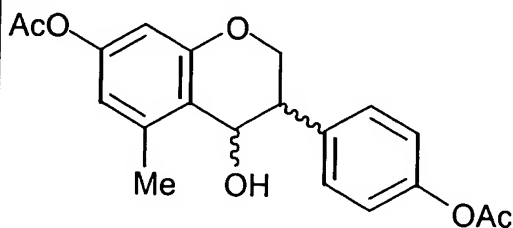
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14. (New) A compound of formula I as defined in claim 12 or of formula II as defined in claim 13 selected from the group consisting of:



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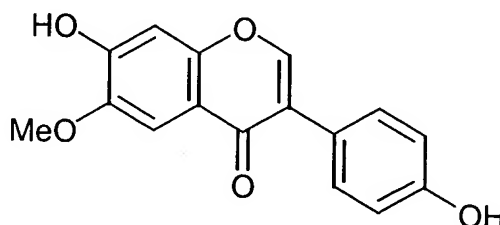


15. (New) A method for the treatment, prophylaxis, amelioration, defence against, or prevention of menopausal syndrome including hot flashes, anxiety, depression, mood swings, night sweats, headaches, and urinary incontinence; osteoporosis; premenstrual syndrome, including fluid retention, cyclical mastalgia, and dysmenorrhoea; Reynaud's Syndrome; Reynaud's Phenomenon; Buerger's Disease; coronary artery spasm; migraine headaches; hypertension; benign prostatic hypertrophy; all forms of cancer including breast cancer; uterine cancer; ovarian cancer; testicular cancer; large bowel cancer; endometrial cancer; prostatic cancer; uterine cancer; atherosclerosis; Alzheimer's disease; inflammatory diseases including inflammatory bowel disease, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease; rheumatic diseases including rheumatoid arthritis; acne; baldness including male pattern baldness (alopecia hereditaria); psoriasis; diseases associated with oxidant stress including cancer; myocardial infarction; stroke; arthritis; sunlight induced skin damage or cataracts (the "therapeutic indications") which comprises administering to a subject a therapeutically effective amount of one or more compounds selected from formula

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I and formula II as defined in claim 12 or 13, respectively, with the proviso that the compound of formula



is specifically disclaimed for the treatment or prophylaxis of atherosclerosis.

16. (New) An agent according to claim 12 or 13 which comprises one or more compounds selected from formulae I and II as defined in claims 12 or 13 either alone or in association with one or more carriers and/or excipients.

17. (New) A therapeutic composition which comprises one or more compounds selected from formula I and II as defined in claims 12 or 13 in association with one or more pharmaceutical carriers and/or excipients.

18. (New) A drink or food-stuff, which contains one or more compounds selected from formulae I and II as defined in claims 12 or 13.

19. (New) A microbial culture or a food-stuff containing one or more microbial strains which microorganisms produce one or more compounds selected from formulae I and II as defined in claims 12 or 13.

20. (New) One or more microorganisms which produce one or more compounds selected from formulae I and II as defined in claims 12 or 13.

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